13:Fraser M-5 (ca. 1890)1901
FR5 Ngoni FR5

888 [622] Yet the position of the old women of the village was a highly honoured one. The mother of the headman was almost more powerful than her son. And we always take good care when we enter a new village to win the kindly favour of the old grandmother first of all. Then we are sure we have found a way to the son's heart. One of the most beautiful things in our tribal life is the honour which is paid to the grey hairs of the village. The bent and helpless old men who lived through the glorious fighting [623] days, and understand all precedent and etiquette are the judges and councillors. And no case can be tried, no decision can be made, until the old men give their presence and their opinion. It is hard when the young are leaping ahead of their fathers through education to maintain this veneration for the elders. Yet it is the very backbone of the tribe. There is nothing more contemptible than an African or an Asiastic with a veneer of education who affects to despise the elders of the village. But I know no more pathetic sight than our afternoon schools where grey-haired men and women may be seen peering through faded eyes trying also to learn to read and keep abreast of the young and alert life, while the sun goes down in their eventide.

233 [181] The Ngoni were first of all a fighting people, and then a pastoral. Their land affords splendid pasture for cattle. And they take great pride in their herds. Round the cattle kraal centre all their ambitions, and highest delights, and best intelligence. They sit and watch the cattle going out in the early morning and coming in in the evening, and know every spot and colour of their beautiful animals. The quietest and most peaceful sight I know is when the sun goes down, and the fierce heat has [534] given place to the welcome cool of the evening. Then you will hear the music of reed pipes, and looking up you see a long line [512] of sleek, solemn cows, with large silken dew laps, and fat humps, slowly coming up the village path lowing for their calves, while boys ride on their backs sitting or standing upright, balancing themselves carefully and blowing on their pipes. Before and behind them runs a troop of goats and sheep bleating with such a human cry. In a moment the village is alive—sheep and goats are chased back and forward till they find the huts where they sleep with their masters. And boys run out with wooden pails [234] into which they milk what the calves have not sucked from their mothers.